

In 1993 my cardiologist said I had blockages and should have bypass surgery. He went on to say that my heart was so bad that he didn't know if the surgeon would do the bypass surgery. I saw the surgeon and he reviewed my test results and my records. He decided to do the surgery. I had 5 blockages.

Four years later my cardiologist told my wife and I that there was nothing more that she could do for me and would we consider heart transplant surgery. We said yes. I went through a battery of tests and they found that three of the bypasses were totally blocked and this was after only four years. I was then put on the waiting list and waited sixteen months for a heart.

I don't believe I would be here today if I didn't have the transplant.

With all the people on the different waiting lists, I believe we should encourage everyone to sign for organ donation on their driver's license or donor card. Many on the waiting lists will die before their names come to the top of the lists. Organ donations is all about saving lives and I feel we should encourage everyone to be donors.

I think having organ donation on license plates will keep it in every one's mind and will do more than anything else.

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**AB 442: Donate Life Wisconsin License Plates  
Testimony by State Representative Joan Ballweg  
Before the Assembly Committee on Transportation  
August 16, 2007**

Thank you Chairman Petrowski and committee members for holding this hearing on AB 442, which would authorize the creation of a "Donate Life Wisconsin" specialty license plate. This vehicle registration plate will help raise funds to promote organ and tissue donation in Wisconsin.

As you may recall, this is an issue that I am very passionate about. Earlier this session, I authored Assembly Joint Resolution 41, designating April as "Donate Life Month" in Wisconsin.

I have taken on this issue as a personal challenge, as a result of a family tragedy earlier this year. My 19 year-old nephew, Caleb Gottinger died from a brain hemorrhage, after he fell and hit head. While this was a great loss for our family, there were others who received a second chance at life. Caleb was an organ donor, and eight of his organs were donated to recipients for transplant.

Earlier this month data was released from 2006 which showed Wisconsin lead the nation in organ donation with 767 transplants. While this is positive news, there is still room for improvement. In Wisconsin alone there are around 1,500 people on waiting lists for organs. Nationally, there are over 96,000 people on waiting lists, and 100 names are added each day. Sadly,

an average of 18 people dies each day because of the shortage of organs available for transplant.

Currently, at least 20 other states offer organ and tissue donor awareness license plates. The money raised by this specialty plate will go to Donate Life Wisconsin, which is a coalition of 13 different groups and two state agencies. Joining me today are Trey Schwab, the Outreach Coordinator for U.W. Health Organ Procurement Organization, and vice-president of Donate Life Wisconsin, and Mary Nachreiner, the Community/Family Services Specialist for U.W. Health Organ Procurement Organization, who is also a Donor Mom.

Both of them can add perspective how this funding will benefit organ and tissue donation efforts in Wisconsin. Also, I believe we have some organ recipients in the room that will come forward to tell their personal story.

If you have any questions, I would be happy to answer them.